

## What You Sow

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# What You Sow

by [SilverWing15](#)

## Summary

He glances at the guards around him.

“Eyes down!” one of them barks. It is not the one who likes Phil.

Phil returns his eyes to the floor. He can see the chains around his waist, connected to stiff poles. Like those catch poles you’d see on animal rescue shows.

Or Phil assumes that you would see them. Its been five years. Maybe they’ve found something better.

The catch-pole comparison used to bother him. He used to bristle at the thought of being treated like an animal. It is no less galling now, but he is...used to it.

He is what the guards refer to as “wild caught.” He’s used to being dehumanized.

After all, he isn’t human, not to the people in charge, not to the Vault. The Vault contains two things: guards, and threats.

Phil is a threat.

## Notes

:D Phil Backstory!! This one nearly made me cry while writing it fam, and that does not happen often with my own writing. Brace yourselves, Phil is not having a good time. Phil and Techno's song in this universe is \*Absolutely\* "Time in a Bottle" listen to that one while reading for best angst results, it came up in my playlist while writing and I died.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

Philza has been an occupant of Pandora's Vault for five years, eleven months, two weeks, and five days. He is currently on his way back from his shower.

He has only recently started getting showers, previously he was simply left to be dirty. He appreciates that on the outside, someone, somewhere, cared enough about the people in the vault to make enough noise that the court determined that showers were not optional.

He doesn't know who it was, or how they found out that some of the prisoners didn't get showers. Nothing gets out of the Vault. Especially not information. Maybe one of the guards. There is one of them who likes Phil well enough.

There aren't many other Alpha Class prisoners who could earn enough pity to move the heart of anyone, much less one of the guards. Supervillains are not sympathetic. The showers are likely for Phil's sole benefit.

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After all, he isn't human, not to the people in charge, not to the Vault. The Vault contains two things: guards, and threats.

Phil is a threat.

He never meant to be, he tried very hard not to be, for all of his life. Until one day, one slip. He hadn't even hurt anyone. A hero had simply learned of his power, and the next thing he knew he was in chains, he was no longer a citizen, he was a threat.

And he has been in chains ever since. His hands encased in metal, his wings clipped and bound, his ankles hobbled, muzzle cupped around his jaw. The catch-poles make sure that he can't get close to anyone. He is free in his cell, the hobbles and muzzle aren't required there, or the catch-poles.

Freedom, in the Vault, is relative.

Phil turns the corner, stops to wait for the gate to open, passes through and waits for the next one. They're returning to the Alpha wing, they haven't finished constructing the showers there yet, so Phil gets to take a tour of the Beta wing once a week.

It's a nice place, they've got nice water pressure. Phil appreciates nice water pressure.

His old apartment had none, but it did stay hot for *hours*. It had been nice. He only gets fifteen minutes for a shower now.

Phil wonders if the super had ever gotten that fixed. It's been five years, nearly six, that's a lot of time.

That's so much time.

A taser baton presses threateningly into the back of his neck. Phil waits patiently. The hobbles come off, the belt of catch-poles, finally, the muzzle. The baton stays on the back of his neck, there are guns cocking behind him as the other guards get out of the line of fire.

"Proceed into your cell," the guard says. This is also not the one who likes Phil. "Any deviation will result in immediate termination."

The door to Phil's cell slides open, Phil takes one, two, three, steps forward. The door slides shut. The locks go *click, click, click, click, thunk*.

Shower time is officially now over.

Phil does his stretches. It takes an hour now to get through the full set. On days without showers he does two sets, but the shower has eaten into that time. He doesn't mind, it's nice to get out of the cell.

Once he has finished his stretches, he moves on to his garden. He is allowed one indulgence, since he was a civilian, and not an active threat to society when he was taken to the vault. He didn't get that before, but again, someone, somewhere, decided that they would take pity on him and he chose a garden.

It changes, unlike everything else. No matter how slowly, it grows, it dies, it gets sick, it recovers. The world in miniature. He used to have a fish, but it was determined that it was too much of a risk--somehow--and they took it away.

He misses his fish.

It is hard to tend the garden without hands, but that is alright, that means that it takes more time.

He has nothing but time in the Vault, he has to be very careful about how he wastes it.

In the first year, he simply let himself languish in his cell, he laid on the cot and didn't care for the time that went by. His meals went un-eaten a lot of the time. For other prisoners they might have moved on to force-feeding.

Alpha class prisoners are not force fed. That would bring them too close into contact with others and harm could be done to the guards. After all, they are threats. If they want to quietly starve to death, they are allowed.

Phil nearly had.

But he has always been a survivor, and he couldn't make himself do it.

In the next four years, he developed a careful, strict, schedule for wasting the endless hours of time he has on his hands.

Now it is time to water his garden, and carefully turn the pots so that all of the leaves will get sunlight without the plant having to tilt itself. Phil's garden consists entirely of plants growing perfectly straight.

Last month, he made them all grow to the left. Next month he thinks that he'll try to get them going right. He isn't sure what he'll do after that. They're getting tall, perhaps he could try making them twist in over themselves.

He got the idea from bonsai trees, but he cannot shape his plants in a more direct way. His hands encased in metal are incapable of being gentle, and he is certainly not allowed any sort of cutting implement.

The garden eats up thirty minutes of time.

There are still three hours until dinner. Four after that until lights out. Seven after that until the lights are back on. And then Phil will have been in Pandora's Vault for Five years, eleven months, two weeks, and six days.

Phil likes the sixth day of the week. There is a cook on that shift that always adds a little more salt to the mashed potatoes.

Phil appreciates the extra salt. Usually the potatoes are so bland.

For the next hour he runs through the songs he remembers. They are not allowed music, in the Vault. Not unless they make it themselves.

Phil wonders what sort of songs play on the radio now. He used to listen to it on his way to work. They probably aren't playing that one terribly catchy pop song that he hated anymore.

Phil sings it though. It is terribly catchy, it is one of the only songs he can still remember clearly, sung in a voice other than his own.

He is not good at singing. His voice is low and scratchy and he expects off key. Nobody has told him if it is though. He doesn't think anyone can even hear him outside of his cell.

Well, the security camera is probably equipped with audio, he wonders if they mute him during Song Hour.

After Song Hour is Meditation Hour.

Phil isn't sure how you're really supposed to do mediation, but he sits quietly and lets the silence fall after the last notes of the song. It wraps around him like a blanket, like an old friend.

Five years is long enough to be old friends, Phil thinks.

He wonders if any of his friends from before still remember him. If the guy who lived across the hall from him and always came in from work right when Phil was leaving does. They'd smiled at each other every morning, never asked each other's names though.

Phil wishes he'd asked, now.

Meditation Hour is cut short today. It will throw off his schedule but he is always inclined to melancholy thoughts after Shower Day.

He will do the full hour tomorrow.

He will add extra time onto Walking Hour, he cut one hour off of Stretching Time anyway, the exercise will be good for him.

Walking Hour is a nice way of saying *Pacing* Hour. Phil wonders if it brings the guards any amusement to see him walking in circles in his cell. Like a caged animal.

Probably not. The guards are very rarely amused.

There is little to find amusing about threats.

Phil has his bed and garden along the walls of his cell that he has to avoid, but other than that he is free to go around and around and around. It reminds him of circling high on the thermals. Flying free. Nothing but endless space around him.

Phil pulls his mind away from that path. Shower Time really has made him melancholy.

There is still an hour until dinner.

And then lights out, and then lights back on, and then it will be a new day.

It will be A Bit More Salt On The Potatoes Day.

Something to look forward to.

The hour before dinner is usually Memories Hour, but Phil decides to put that off for tonight. Breakdown Hour is a bit harder to schedule, but Phil always makes time for it when it comes around.

He doesn't let Breakdown Hour cut into Dinner Hour. Dinner Hour is extremely important. He is given a full meal, nutritionally balanced to account for the physical activity he does in his cell. He could eat it all in a few minutes, but Phil stretches it out for the full hour.

The food is cold by the time he is done, but he has eaten away a whole hour along with the bland potatoes.

Three hours until lights out. Seven hours until lights back on. And then he will have been in the Vault for five years, eleven months, two weeks, and six days.

It will be A Little More Salt On The Mashed Potatoes day.

Phil leans his head back against the wall.

Something goes *tap tap tap ta-tap tap...tap* on the wall behind him.

Phil has been in the Vault for five years, eleven months, two weeks, and five days. He has rested his head against every inch of wall, and never has it made that sound.

Phil turns and rests his forehead against the wall, so his hands are hidden from the camera, and *tap tap tap ta-tap...tap* 's back.

The wall is silent.

Its been awhile since he had auditory hallucinations, but he has had them before. Phil's shoulders slump.

*Tap...tap...ta-tap.*

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

The Vault is in chaos. Doors are opening, prisoners are escaping, guards are dying. The shadows are alive around them, a writhing mass, a living hand of vengeance. You reap what you sow, Phil's grandmother had always said. The time has come for the harvest

### Chapter Notes

They're busting out fam

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There is a pair of eyes watching him from beneath the leaf of one of his plants. Phil hides his smile and moves Garden Hour up a few minutes. The Knocker's shadow is a familiar presence. He carefully reaches out with his cuffed hands as though he is simply adjusting the plant.

The shadow slips into the darkness that surrounds his hands. It is an almost-there almost-not feeling of fur or maybe scales, or maybe feathers. Phil moves his fingers over the not-quite-there jaw and the shadow whispers incomprehensible encouragement.

The shadow is the only being to touch his hands in six years, two months, three weeks, and one day. Soon that will change.

It isn't easy, planning to escape the most secure prison in the world without even being able to speak to each other. The Shadow can carry his messages to the Knocker, but Phil cannot understand it in return.

It has taken time.

But they have plenty of it.

The shadow gnaws at his chains, slips into the mechanisms of the cuffs, circuitry and mechanics, things that should contain his power. Contain him. Contain the threat.

They fall away, and his hands, his *hands*.

They're pale, they seem so small, so vulnerable. Unfamiliar. He stretches his fingers, he doesn't brush metal. He laughs. He holds the shadow close to his chest. It curls around his



throat, under his hair, where it is safe from the light.

Phil looks at his hands again. He still has a scar on the back of the right one from when he was young. He'd lived outside of the city then, out in the country. He'd been going across the neighbor's field and cut it on the barbed wire.

He runs the fingers of his other hand over it. Chills pass over his skin. Its been six years, two months, three weeks since he felt his own hands touch. He presses them together, palm-to-palm, interlaces his fingers.

Tears burn in his eyes.

He lets them fall.

There are alarms wailing around him, but he doesn't care. The door to his cell bursts open.

He is already on his knees, already lifting his hands, already looking to the floor. "Please!" he cries, tears are good, they lend reality to desperation in his voice as he lifts his hands. "They just fell off, I don't--I didn't do anything, *please*."

This is where it is decided. Freedom or death.

The guard doesn't shoot him from the door. They step into the cell.

Death for them, freedom for Phil.

The guard is barking instructions, and Phil follows the orders automatically. They step closer. Lift the shackles from the ground. Approach. Their gun is trained on him. There are more guards at the door, also pointing weapons at him.

As though guns are fast enough to stop him.

The guard presses the taser baton to the back of his neck and grabs one wrist. The fool.

His family has borne wings for generations. Neighbors used to call them angels.

With his free hand, Phil knocks away the baton, he twists his wrist and tugs the guard closer.

His fingers touch bare skin. It feels like holy vengeance to let the power flow through him. The shadow leaps out from around his throat. It is weak, separated from its master and siblings, but it is strong enough to leap into the walls and shred the wires it finds there. The lights go out, the alarm shuts off.

The guards are alone in the dark.

With him.

A threat.

An angel.

The Angel of Death.

Phil goes about his work.

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The Vault is in chaos. Doors are opening, prisoners are escaping, guards are dying. The shadows are alive around them, a writhing mass, a living hand of vengeance.

*You reap what you sow*, Phil's grandmother had always said.

The time has come for the harvest.

The shadows guide him through the prison, past the escaping, past the dying, past the ones living for the first time in who knows how long. The walls of the Vault are crumbling.

Pandora's failing was not hubris, but it was the failing of those who made this place. Now all of the evils are going out into the world.

And Phil is among them.

The shadows stay by his side, they brush his hands, his deadly, dangerous, naked, vulnerable hands. They lead him out of the prison and into the night.

It is a new moon. The stars are shining so bright.

There is a man silhouetted against them.

He is tall, broad, dangerous looking. A threat. The shadows swirl around him, a pack of wolves welcoming their leader. They whine in strange voices, whisper unintelligible things to him. He runs his hands over their dark pelts, welcomes them home like a father greeting his children.

"Hello," Phil says.

"Hello," the Knocker replies.

"I'm Phil."

"Techno."

"We did it," Phil says, turning to look back at the Vault. Someone has set it on fire. Someone else is either melting it or pulling parts of it into a black hole.

"We did," Techno agrees.

It's strange to be able to speak to him. It's strange to talk to anyone. Phil feels like he's at one of those parties he attended during college. He'd only ever gone to try and make friends, but he'd never been confident enough to actually speak to anyone.

A shadow leaps up onto his shoulders. Phil laughs and reaches up to pet it.

“They like you,” Techno says, “they’ve never...liked anybody else before.”

“Huh,” Phil says. He doesn’t know what more to say than that. “I like them too. They’re beautiful.”

Techno blinks at him, Phil wonders if that’s a strange thing to say. “They’re dangerous.”

“So am I.”

Techno laughs, its quiet, rusty, but its a laugh. Phil laughs with him. He hasn’t been able to laugh with anyone in much longer than six years, two months, three weeks, and one day.

His laugh sounds more like a sob.

He reaches out but pulls away. Clutches his hands to his chest.

“Your power,” Techno says, “you--can you control it?”

“Yes. It was the first thing I taught myself after it manifested. I didn’t--I never wanted to hurt anyone.”

Techno reaches out and takes his hand. Phil gasps, soft and surprised and overwhelmed. Techno’s hands are larger than his, calloused, scarred, warm. Techno laces their fingers together.

Phil could kill him.

“I could kill you.”

“As long as I die free,” Techno says.

Phil doesn’t kill him. He takes a hesitant step forward. Techno matches him, and they are hugging, on the beach, as the Vault is rendered to ash behind them. The shadows coo and cheer and whisper softly what Phil thinks must be encouragement.

On the shore a bit away from them, someone is parting the sea. They can walk to the mainland, to the city. Away from the remnants of the vault.

They do so. Hand in hand.

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Phil has faithfully counted the hours for six years, two months, three weeks, and one day. He loses track of them now. They storm the city like an army, and Techno and Phil watch as it falls under attack. They don’t try to stop it.

They walk away, hand in hand. The shadows around them.

They aren’t heroes.

They are dangerous men, they are threats. But there is no Vault to contain them.

They walk through the city, see things, touch things, destroy things. Why would they not? Who is there to stop them.

They laugh, giddy and childish as the shadows shatter the door to a convenience store. They drink the cheap beer, they eat the snacks, so flavorful that Phil feels like his tongue is going to explode.

They climb a skyscraper and Phil spreads his clipped feathers to the breeze. “You’ll fly again,” Techno promises, their hands still laced together. “They’ll grow back and you’ll fly.”

“I’ll take you with me,” Phil promises.

Techno laughs, “that’ll be something. Can you even carry me?”

“I didn’t say it would be graceful, I said you’d *come with*, ” Phil replies.

“Always?” Techno asks.

“Hm?”

“I can always come with? Even if its not graceful?”

Phil laughs and squeezes Techno’s hand even tighter, “ *always*, ” he swears.

The sun rises, they watch it together, hand in hand.

It is the first day of Phil’s freedom, but he doesn’t feel the need to count it.

## Chapter End Notes

This is the last of the Backstory era so tomorrow we're popping back to where we left the timeline (or a little bit after that actually) for some Tubbo Time, but that will be the end of Dumpster Verse from me

## End Notes

You can find me on tumblr at technobladesbasement

If you're inspired to create anything based on my fics, art, writing, interperative dance you have full permission to do it. Inspiring other people to do stuff is my favorite thing.

If you saw typos no you didn't <3

I love comments but I am shit at replying to them, sometimes Maddie or Zambo will reply for me because they are blessed, wonderful people who know I have so much anxiety. So much. but I love all comments regardless and I thank everyone who leaves me one, they brighten my day

Works inspired by this one

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